

Professional Standards Application Process

September 16, 2020 FINAL APPROVED

I. Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee

In 2015, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation designating that the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) would oversee the accreditation of local sexual and domestic violence agencies. This legislation also included the creation of the Virginia Advisory Committee on Sexual and Domestic Violence and the **Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee**. Prior to 2015, the accreditation process had been developed and coordinated by the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance).

The purpose of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee (PSC) is to establish voluntary accreditation standards and procedures by which local sexual and domestic violence programs can be systematically measured and evaluated with a peer-reviewed process. The PSC is responsible for carrying out the duties assigned to it under [Chapter 1 of Title 9.1 of the Code of Virginia \(§9.1-116.3\)](#). The PSC is comprised of six directors of local sexual and domestic violence programs appointed by the Virginia Advisory Committee on Sexual and Domestic Violence, and six directors of local sexual and domestic violence programs appointed by the Action Alliance. There are also two non-voting members, one appointed by DCJS and one appointed by the Action Alliance. In addition, the PSC receives assistance from the DCJS Professional Standards Coordinator. The Professional Standards Coordinator acts as staff support (e.g., meeting logistics, research, best practices), facilitates and implements the accreditation process (e.g., provides technical assistance), and serves as a liaison for the PSC.

II. Professional Standards Application Fee

The fee for an agency to apply for accreditation is \$150.00, to be paid at the time of application to DCJS. Fees will be used to support administrative costs of DCJS to manage the application process, as outlined in *Code of Virginia §9.1-116.3*: “Fees for accreditation shall be used to support any administrative costs of the Department.”

The fee will be paid one time for every three-year accreditation period. The fee is non-refundable. There is no annual fee to be an accredited agency.

III. Timeline

A. Due Dates

Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies (SDVA) that are not currently accredited may submit an Organizational Self-Assessment Summary during the time period announced annually by the PSC and/or DCJS. Of the summaries submitted, up to 20 agencies will be randomly selected to apply for accreditation that year. Application information, instructions, and due dates will be sent to those agencies. Agencies that are not selected to apply that year will be notified.

Accredited SDVA wishing to retain their accreditation must apply for renewal in their third full year to avoid a gap or lapse in their status.

B. Status Validity

Each agency's accreditation status will be valid for at least three years after the initial determination of provisional or full accreditation. The dates of status validity will be clearly listed in accreditation materials provided to the agency and documented for the PSC by DCJS staff.

C. Process Timeline

The accreditation process will take approximately six months from the time an application is submitted until a final decision is made by the PSC. In the event of unexpected or extraordinary circumstances, this process may be delayed, but every effort will be made to complete this in a timely manner.

Once a complete application for accreditation is submitted to DCJS, the DCJS Professional Standards Coordinator (Coordinator) and Professional Standards Consultant (Consultant) will confirm receipt of application and schedule the site visit. Site visits will be conducted by the Consultant within four months of the application date. Submitted application responses and documents will be reviewed by the Coordinator within the same time period.

The Coordinator and Consultant will provide a recommendation on accreditation to the PSC at the quarterly meeting following the site visit and application review. The PSC will vote on the recommendation, and the applicant agency will be notified of their status within ten (10) business days following the meeting.

IV. Application Process

A. Organizational Self-Assessment Summary

The Organizational Self-Assessment is available on the DCJS website at the following link:
<https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/victims-services/programs/sexual-domestic-violence-program-professional-standards>.

The Organizational Self-Assessment should be completed internally by agencies interested in seeking accreditation. Upon completion, if an agency believes they meet the professional standards, they should submit an Organizational Self-Assessment Summary to sdvstandards@dcjs.virginia.gov. Once received, further instructions will be sent to agencies by DCJS staff. Organizational Self-Assessment Summaries are accepted by DCJS during the time period announced annually by the PSC and/or DCJS.

B. Professional Standards Application

The professional standards application is completed online at the following link:
<https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/victims-services/programs/sexual-domestic-violence-program-professional-standards/application>

The application is password-protected. Eligible applicants will be provided with the password once selected to apply.

C. Site Visit

The applicant will be contacted to schedule a site visit. During the site visit, the DCJS Consultant will ask questions and complete the Site Visit Checklist to assess compliance with the Professional Standards.

The Site Visit Checklist is available at the following link:

<https://www.dcls.virginia.gov/victims-services/programs/sexual-domestic-violence-program-professional-standards/application>

D. Application Review

Review of each application will be completed by the DCJS Coordinator and Consultant, and based on their findings, a recommendation will be presented to the full PSC for consideration and status determination. The PSC will reach consensus on one of the status determinations, as outlined in the next section.

Recommendations to the PSC will be based on responses to the application questions, documentation submitted with the application, site visit questions, and Site Visit Checklist criteria.

Members of the PSC affiliated with an applicant agency will withdraw their participation and presence during meetings and decision-making on that agency's application.

E. Status Determination

There are three possible status determinations for professional standards applicants:

Fully Accredited:

The PSC will determine a status of *Fully Accredited* for an agency having demonstrated through the review process that the agency meets 100% of the professional standards.

Provisionally Accredited:

Agencies that do not meet 100% of the professional standards may be *Provisionally Accredited*.

To be considered provisionally accredited, applicant agencies must, at a minimum, demonstrate that they provide 24-hour crisis intervention services to all victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in their communities, and that these services are confidential and free of charge. These services must include a hotline, provisions for emergency housing, and emergency accompaniment for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

The PSC will also consider progress on previous "plans of action" for agencies that have been provisionally accredited in prior cycles.

As available, the PSC and DCJS staff will provide support, assistance, and resources to provisionally accredited agencies as they endeavor to become fully accredited.

Provisionally accredited agencies have six months to submit a “Plan of Action” to comply with each unmet criteria, and up to twelve months to document that the professional standards are being met. The plans of action and associated timelines are the responsibility of the applicant agency. The Coordinator will also track this information and provide periodic updates to the PSC. At any time, documentation in response to plans of action may be submitted to the Coordinator, who will provide it to the PSC. The PSC will review the information and may change the applicant’s status from provisionally accredited to fully accredited.

Denied:

The PSC will deny accreditation status to any agency that does not, at a minimum, demonstrate that they provide 24-hour crisis intervention services to all victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in their communities, and that these services are confidential and free of charge. Crisis intervention services must include a hotline, provisions for emergency housing, and emergency accompaniment for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

The PSC will deny accreditation to any provisionally accredited agencies that do not submit plans of action or meet the professional standards within 12 months of initial status.

Denied applicants may be given preference to apply during the next application cycle. As available, support, assistance, and resources will be provided to agencies in preparing for future applications.

F. Plans of Action

Applicants are encouraged to submit plans of action and timelines for any unmet standards at the time of application. In addition, plans of action may be requested at any time by the PSC or DCJS staff.

As previously noted, provisionally accredited agencies have six months to submit a plan of action to comply with each unmet criteria, and up to twelve months to document that the professional standards are being met.

G. Change in Status

The PSC may change a status from provisionally accredited to fully accredited once the agency meets 100% of the professional standards. The PSC may request a site visit prior to granting a change in status, which will be completed by the DCJS Consultant.

V. Status Determination Appeals

Agencies may initiate an appeal of any PSC status determination by submitting a letter of appeal via email to the DCJS Professional Standards Coordinator at sdvstandards@dcjs.virginia.gov.

Upon receipt of letters of appeal, the PSC will appoint an Appeals Subcommittee of three to five current and/or former PSC members. The Appeals Subcommittee will meet and review all appeals within 90 days after receipt. The decision of the Appeals Subcommittee is final and will be provided to the PSC and to the appealing agency within ten (10) business days of that meeting.

Members of the PSC affiliated with an appealing agency will withdraw their participation and presence during meetings and decision-making on that agency's appeal.